

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to week five in our series called Can You Feel It? Our topic is God's Wisdom on Human Emotion. So far we have talked about Anger, Bitterness, Fear, Worry, and Envy. We've seen that our emotions are a gift from God and that God gave them to us to increase our capacity for life.
- B. It's not God's plan for you to churn through life like a heartless robot. When God made you, He put into you the ability to respond to the world around you, emotionally. He also gave you an amazing ability to BOND; to create attachments with people—healthy, loving connections, so that you care deeply about someone else, and someone else cares deeply about you.
- C. Your emotions make it possible for you to BOND with people around you.
- D. They even make it possible for you to bond with God.
- E. Emotions are good things. You don't need to run from them, deny them, suppress them, avoid them, or manage them.
- F. You should FEEL them. Feel your feelings. And in appropriate ways and appropriate places and times, let them out.
- G. One of the big reasons God gave you emotions was to EVOKE MOTIONS. In other words, your emotions motivate you to take action. If people did bad stuff to little kids, and nobody got fired up emotionally, who wants to live in that world? But God gave us our emotions to get us off our butts, so we can take action. We can defend the defenseless. We can fight for justice. We can preserve relationships. Emotions are motivators; they evoke motion.

II. Who feels sad?

- A. The emotion I want to put on the table today is SADNESS.
- B. Let's start with Jesus:
 - 1. *"He took Peter and Zebedee's two sons, James and John, and He began to be filled with anguish and deep distress. He told them, 'My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with Me.' He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, 'My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from Me. Yet I want Your will, not Mine.'" Matthew 26:37-39, NLT.*
- C. Here is Jesus, just before His crucifixion. He knows what's going to happen, and has this unbearable sorrow. His soul is crushed with grief. He is filled with anguish and deep distress.
- D. He felt the most intense sadness you can imagine, and that was BEFORE His actual crucifixion. We can't even begin to imagine what He felt when He was going through it.
- E. Here was the perfect, ideal man, crushed by a weight of sadness that most of us can't imagine.
- F. Was His faith weak? No.
- G. Was He sinning? No.
- H. Did He doubt God? No.
- I. Was He a bad Christian? No.
- J. This is the first truth I want to draw out for you on sadness:
 - 1. YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO GOD DOES NOT EXEMPT YOU FROM SADNESS.
- K. Good Christians feel sad. Being sad is not a sin. It is not something to feel guilty about. It is not a sign that you're messed up with God. Good Christians can be sad. It's okay. Even Jesus felt it.
- L. I have to say this because a lot of us grew up with the idea that if you're a good little boy or girl, God's going to make you happy. And you'll never feel sad, and you'll be happy and singing all day long.
- M. Wrong. The best followers of Jesus felt the arrows of sadness:
 - 1. Jacob felt sad. (Gen 37:34, 35)
 - 2. Hannah felt sad. (1 Sam 1:15)
 - 3. David felt sad. (2 Sam 18:33)
 - 4. Jeremiah felt sad. (Lam 1:12) He wrote a whole book about it; it's called Lamentations.
 - 5. Isaiah felt sad.
 - 6. Mary felt sad. (John 11:19-40)
 - 7. Martha felt sad. (John 11:19-40)
 - 8. Jesus felt sad.
- N. But why? What was the source of His sadness?

III. Why feel sad?

- A. There are three main examples when Jesus showed His sadness in the Bible.
 - 1. We've already read about one, when He was going to the Cross.
 - 2. He also cried at the graveside of His friend Lazarus.
 - 3. And then, when He was on a hill overlooking Jerusalem, Jesus looked at the city, and started crying. (Luke 19:41, 2).
- B. I think these examples are important, because if you think about them, you can figure out what sadness is all about.
- C. Sadness is the feeling you get when you sense the gap between the way things are and the way things ought to be.
- D. I think we all have this idea in our heads that there is an ideal world. Ideal house. Ideal body. Ideal marriage. Ideal girlfriend or boyfriend. Ideal family, children, parents, job, boss, church, and pastor.
- E. We have this concept of the ideal floating around in our heads, and when we go to our happy place, we can almost taste that ideal.
- F. But then what happens?
- G. Reality bites us in the butt like a bad dog.
- H. You don't live in the ideal house. After two kids, your ideal body sagged way south. Your world is the opposite of ideal, it's been infested by disease, death, disharmony, and other words that start with "D."
- I. And that gap, between what is, and what should be—your soul interprets that as LOSS and you feel sad.
- J. Sadness is the price we pay for getting ourselves kicked out of Paradise.

1. So Jesus saw the city of Jerusalem, and the thousands of people living there and He knew how far short they fell from God's ideal. They weren't living the life God planned for them, and He cried because He felt sad over that gap.
2. And Jesus stood by the grave of His friend Lazarus, and He saw how much devastation death and sin had caused in the world—and all the heartbreak and suffering. And even though He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, He still cried. Why? Because Jesus saw the difference between what is and what should be. He felt that LOSS. He felt sad.
3. And when Jesus faced the Cross, it was very personal. He became horrifyingly aware of the depth of pain He was about to endure and the punishment God was going to dump on Him. Never before had Jesus felt the difference between the way things are and the way things ought to be. That feeling, He said, crushed Him with sorrow and sadness.

- K. Sadness is the price we pay for the fall—for welcoming sin into the world.
- L. And you might say, "Hey, I didn't do that! Adam and Even welcomed sin into the world. Don't blame me for that part of the story!"
- M. Right, except for this: I followed you around at Costco, and you proved to me that if you were in Adam's bare feet, you would have done the same thing. You would have bitten the apple. You would have sinned and we all prove it every day. We can't just blame Adam.
- N. Collectively, we all embraced brokenness. We all laid out the welcome mat for sin, disease, heartbreak, and death.
- O. So we feel sadness. Sadness is our emotional response to LOSS: Loss of hope, loss of health, loss of love, loss of life, loss of the ideal world that God created.
- P. When you feel sad, and don't know why, ask yourself what you've lost? What loss am I grieving?
- Q. And what can we do about it?
- R. Before I get to that, let me talk about what NOT to do about your sadness.

IV. What NOT to do with sadness.

- A. Emotions evoke motion. They are motivators. Unfortunately we can use our emotions to motivate unhealthy motion, just as easily as healthy motion.
- B. The single great danger of sadness is that we let it motivate the unhealthiest step we could ever take:
 1. We let our sadness redefine God as something other than good.
- C. One of the most powerful writers of the 20th century was C.S. Lewis, and in my opinion the most powerful book he wrote was called *A Grief Observed*. Lewis was a confirmed bachelor, until he was swept off his feet by a wonderful woman named Helen Joy Davidman Gresham. He married later in life, and could scarcely describe his joy.
- D. Until just three years into his marriage, Helen died. Lewis chronicled his struggles with that loss and his struggles with God in light of that loss. He wrote,
 1. "What chokes every prayer and every hope is the memory of all the prayers H. and I offered and all the false hopes we had. Not hopes raised merely by our own wishful thinking, hopes encouraged, even forced upon us, by false diagnoses, by X-ray photographs, by strange remissions, by one temporary recovery that might have ranked as a miracle. Step by step we were 'led up the garden path.' Time after time, when [God] seemed most gracious He was really preparing the next torture."
- E. He had lost his one true love. He describes how being married to Helen brought him out of his shell of bachelorhood and into a world of living color. But then he lost her. Lewis wrote,
 1. "Oh God, God, why did you take such trouble to force this creature out of its shell if it is now doomed to crawl back—to be sucked back—into it?"
- F. Of all the emotions, sadness is the one that makes us question God the most. And it's not just big stuff. It can be little stuff. In the book, *Disappointment With God*, Philip Yancey writes about driving through Chicago on a dark, wintery night, with hail and sleet pelting him, and he was in a bad neighborhood, when his car broke down. He wrote,
 1. "As I raised the hood and hunched over the engine, the sleet stinging my back like tiny pebbles, I prayed over and over, 'Please help me get this car started.'
 2. "No amount of fiddling with wires and tubes and cables would start the car, and so I spent the next hour in a dilapidated diner waiting for a tow truck. Sitting on a plastic chair, my drenched clothes forming a widening pool of water around me, I wondered what God thought about my plight. Did God even care about my frustrations or the waste of energy and money?"
- G. Then Yancey says something super-important for us to understand about sadness:
 1. "... I feel ashamed even to mention such an unanswered prayer. It seems petty and selfish, maybe even stupid, to pray for a car to start. But I have found that petty disappointments tend to accumulate over time, undermining my faith with a lava flow of doubt. I start to wonder whether God cares about everyday details—about me. I am tempted to pray less often, having concluded in advance that it won't matter..."
- H. This is the fatal error that sadness can lead us all to, if we let it. The error that says God isn't good. God doesn't care. God won't answer my prayer.
- I. When Margi and I were all excited about our first child, and we lost that child in a miscarriage, I stopped praying for a year.
- J. I imagine that most of us in this room could say something pretty similar.
- K. Emotions evoke motion, and when we let our sadness motivate motion AWAY FROM GOD, we're in trouble. We give in to despair, hopelessness, cynicism, and sarcasm. We expect evil into our lives, and that expectation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- L. Because there is NO solution to sadness, or suffering, or loss—there is no way to close the gap between what is and what ought to be apart from God.
- M. Whether you're miserable over a broken down car, or a torn apart marriage, or a loved one who's beginning his journey to heaven—you have to move the opposite direction to what your bitter sadness is telling you.
- N. Not away from God.
- O. Move toward God—toward prayer—toward the Bible—toward worship—toward the church.
- P. Because:
 1. "*The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those who are crushed in spirit*" Psalms 34:18, NLT.

- Q. What NOT to do with sadness is let it excuse your putting distance between you and God.
- R. So, what should you do with sadness? What actions should sadness motivate?
- V. What should you do with sadness?
- A. Sadness motivates sympathy for people around us.
1. You weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice.
 2. Right now our friends are scared. They're worried about the economy, jobs, their houses, futures, kids, and everything else. People are scared. They're mad. They're worried.
 3. They don't need advice; they need a friend. Think back to the last time you felt strong sadness. Was that the time for a lecture? Did you want someone to tell you that you had to keep your car tuned up, or you should have been taking your vitamins, or you shouldn't have put on all that weight? No.
 4. You needed a brother or sister to come along side and listen and smile and treat you like there was hope in the universe.
 5. When Job suffered in the Bible, his children died in one day. And then his friends came and tormented him with debate and advice and questioned why God was punishing him, and they were completely clueless. The only good thing they did was stay silent for 7 days!
 - a) *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"* Hebrews 4:15, NKJV.
 6. The sadness we feel makes us tender toward others who suffer loss too.
 7. Sadness is God's way to motivate sympathy for others around us.
- B. Sadness also motivates letting go of things on earth so we can cling to things of heaven.
1. *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory"* Colossians 3:1-4, NKJV.
 2. You spend the first half of your life accumulating stuff, and the second half of your life getting rid of it.
 3. And that getting rid is the hard part. It so often feels like loss.
 4. But the sanest discovery you'll ever make is that your real treasure is in heaven.
 5. And every little loss here, is designed by God to pry open your hand from this world, so that you can take hold of the next world.
 6. Do you get that? I believe God wants us to enjoy life to the fullest. Have fun, have joy, have good things, share good things, enjoy life.
 7. But hold all things lightly.
 8. Hold all things lightly.
 9. Because you WILL LOSE them. It's not if, just when. You will say goodbye to your figure. You will say goodbye to your house. You will say goodbye, one by one, to your family and friends.
 10. And if you don't have a hope to grab onto, you've got nothing.
 11. Because the only solution to sadness will happen on that amazing day when GOD RESTORES PARADISE, when Jesus comes back, and when God undoes the fall. The fall caused our sadness, and the Second Coming of Jesus reverses the fall.
 12. That's why the Bible says:
 - a) *"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* Revelation 21:4, NKJV.
 13. Sadness is the price we pay for living in a fallen world.
 14. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.
 15. And one day, the morning will come, and Jesus will light up the skies, and come and take us home.
 16. And when that day comes, you won't stop to grab your stuff. You'll let it all go. You'll give it all to God. You'll be happy with God. With Jesus, your Savior.
 17. And He will give you back all that He's taken—only now with the stinger removed. No more death or sorrow or pain.
 18. What are you holding onto for dear life? Could God be telling you to hold all things lightly? To be willing to let go of this life, just enough to grab hold of the next?
- C. Sadness motivates you to bow to the sovereignty of God.
1. He's the boss. He gives. He takes away. He does this in his own timing. We cannot control Him.
 2. And many times, we feel confused as to why. Why did God allow this loss? This suffering? This tragedy? Why didn't God answer my prayer?
 3. God seems perfectly content to not answer our questions. Many times, it seems that He didn't hear the question at all.
 4. So what can we do? We can either harden our hearts or bow to God's sovereignty.
 5. *Job said, "Though He slays me, yet I will trust Him"* Job 13:15.
 6. *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"* Romans 8:28, NAS95.
- D. Sadness can motivate you to Jesus, who alone can close the gap between the way things are and the way they ought to be.
1. *"For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. But sorrow without repentance is the kind that results in death"* 2 Corinthians 7:10, NLT.
 2. A lot of our sadness comes from our own guilt and shame. And into that guilt and shame stepped Jesus. He was morally perfect, but He died a criminal's death. Why? To close the gap between who you are and who you need to be.
 3. When He hung on the cross, God transferred your guilt, your shame, your brokenness, your evil, your selfishness, your twistedness, and your addictions to Jesus.
 4. If it draws you down from who you're meant to be, God transferred it from you to Jesus.

5. And then God lit a bonfire and consumed Jesus instead of consuming you. God punished Christ instead of you.
6. The Bible says that the One who knew no sin (Jesus) was made sin for us. He took the stain from us to Himself, and He bore all the consequences for that stain. He bled and died as your substitute. Just for you.
7. All the sadness you feel about how low you have fallen, Jesus can erase. He can do it. We can't live by our own power. We need God's power and grace.
8. And all that sadness Jesus felt, He felt by choice, because He loves you. His mission was to rescue you from the fall and all its effects: The fall and its sin, the fall and its sadness, the fall with its death and disease—to rescue you forever.
9. Jesus was sad so you could find joy.
10. Are you sad today? Come to Jesus. He'll embrace you. He'll welcome you. He'll love you. I can't say that He'll take away the hurts from your life. He doesn't promise to restore your losses.
11. But He promises something better: a day by day satisfaction, coupled with an everlasting joy.
12. If Jesus can't heal your broken heart, who can?